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ABSTRACT

Baker's Elementary School in Halifax County, North Carolina, has an all-black, rural student population, about 52 percent of whom live with both parents, 32 percent with one parent (mother only) and 16 percent with their grandparents. Data on the students' academic achievement indicated that in the language arts area, children from one parent families (mother only) tended to score lower than children living with both parents or with their grandparents. The findings suggest that while living with the mother only has an unfavorable effect on children's academic achievement, father absence does not seem to make a difference, since children who lived with their grandparents did as well as those who lived with both parents. (MJL)

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Effects of Father Absent on Educational Achievement of Rural Black Children.

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Basic academic data was collected on the entire population of Baker Elementary School in Halifax County. This is an all Black rural school with 116 pupils, and located in one of the poorest areas of the state. Approximately half of the students come from "father absent" homes. Academic achievement seemed to be significantly related to parental status mainly in the language arts areas, and the California Achievement Test score which may also reflect the language arts area. There were no significant differences in IQ or mathematical achievement. Alternate explanations were also discussed.

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a. Purpose: to investigate the academic performance of Black children who live with:

1. both parents
2. a single parent (usually female)
3. member(s) of extended family [usually grandparent(s)]

b. Perspective

Not too many studies have been done in a rural setting concerning aspects of education. Much of the money for educational research in the past decade was directed toward urban or suburban areas with small universities or school systems obtaining little in the way of research funds. Some controversy has developed over the effect of a father's absence on the academic performance of school children. Mackie (1967), Deutsch (1960) and Sciara (1977) felt that an absent father did make a difference. Coleman (1966), Mackler (1969) and Wasserman (1968) found no differences, and Wilson (1967) found mixed results.

c. Methods and/or techniques

Basic educational data was collected on the entire population of Baker's Elementary School in Halifax County. This is a small, rural school with an all Black population. Originally, all 116 students were included in the study, but for various reasons (drop out, move, etc.) the study's population was reduced to 97. Some 52% of the students come from a father present home while 48% come from a father absent home (32% live with one parent and 16% with their grandparents). The county itself is 48% Black, 49% White and 3% Indian, and is considered one of the lowest income counties in the state.

d. Data source

Student's cumulative records provided the California Achievement Test scores, and then all students were administered the Slossen Intelligence Test. Mathematics scores and language arts scores were collected from the homeroom teachers' registers with "A" converted to 4.0 through "D" converted to 1.0. Family background was also collected during homeroom interviews with the students.

e. Results and/or conclusions

Pearson Correlation Coefficients indicated significant correlations some of which were expected such as age and grade level while others were more intriguing such as a negative correlation between IQ and Grade/Age (see Table 1).

Table 2 shows the mean scores on IQ, mathematics, language arts and the California Achievement Test. It is interesting to note that the IQ is approximately 10% below the national norms.

Table 3 utilized the "t" test to test for significance among the parent categories and IQ and no significant differences were obtained as was the case with Table 4 which shows mathematics score and parental status.

Table 5 does show differences when language scores and parental status are compared. The two parent children scoring significantly higher than the one parent children and the children with their grandparents scoring significantly higher than single parents. An "omega squared" was calculated on those with significant t's and shows the influence of the factors being analyzed. That is to say, that in the comparison of single parents and two parents on language arts, the

parental status evidently accounted for some 7% of the difference, and some 21% of the difference when single parents were compared with grandparents.

Table 6 showed a significant difference on the California Achievement Test when grandparents were compared with single parents.

Discussion

The main differences concerning parental status were found in the language arts area which indicated that the children of single parents tend to score lower in this area than the children of two parents or those living with their grandparents. About half the children are from father absent homes, but the study seems to indicate that father absent does not make a difference, while mother only does make a difference in the language arts area at least. The children living with their grandparents do as well as those living with both parents.

Only the academic factors were investigated and it may well be that there is little direct relationship between parental status and academic achievement. Intervening variables such as the quality of the relationship between parents and children may play the more significant part and affect the children's ability to cope with stress, relate with peers and perform academic tasks.

TABLE 1--Pearson Correlation Coefficients

	Parents	Sex	Grade	Age	IQ	Mathematics	Language Arts
Sex	-.08						
Grade	.09	.13					
Age	.07	.15	.96**				
IQ	.07	.07	-.30*	-.40**			
Mathematics	.12	-.34**	-.13	-.18	.26**		
Language Arts	.32**	-.34**	-.05	-.12	.33**	.81**	
Cat	.25**	-.02	.75**	.67**	.17	.23*	.39**

* < .05 ** p < .01

TABLE 2--Mean Scores

Category	IQ	Mathematics	Language Arts	CAT
Single Parent	86.39	2.13	1.89	3.39
Two Parents	90.60	2.38	2.38	4.11
Grandparents	88.12	2.44	2.73	4.78

TABLE 3--Comparison of IQ and Parent Status

Category	t	p
Single Parent vs. Two Parents	.39	> .05
Two Parents vs. Grandparents	1.29	> .05
Grandparents vs. Single Parent	.62	> .05

TABLE 4--Comparison of Mathematics and Parent Status

Category	t	p
Single Parent vs. Two Parents	1.03	> .05
Two Parents vs. Grandparents	.62	> .05
Grandparents vs. Single Parent	1.28	> .05

TABLE 5--Comparison of Language and Parent Status

Category	t	p	ω^2
Single Parent vs. Two Parents	2.38	< .01	.07
Two Parents vs. Grandparents	1.59	> .05	
Grandparents vs. Single Parent	3.65	< .01	.21

TABLE 6--Comparison of California Achievement Test and Parent Status

Category	t	p	ω^2
Single Parents vs. Two Parents	1.74	> .05	
Two Parents vs. Grandparents	1.27	> .05	
Grandparents vs. Single Parent	2.65	< .01	.12

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